

B. T. W. 703

T H E
C A S E

O F
Miss L E S L I E,
A N D H E R
T H R E E S I S T E R S.

T H E
Manufacturers of Thread for Lace,
equal to any Foreign;

I N A N
ADDRESS to the P U B L I C,

But particularly to the

P A T R I O T I C S O C I E T I E S,
F O R T H E

Encouragement of Arts and Manufactures,

Published at the Request, and by the Desire of several
P E R S O N S of D I S T I N C T I O N.



L O N D O N,

Printed: And Sold by D. WILSON, and T. CADELL,
in the Strand; Messrs. RICHARDSON and
URQUHART, at the Royal Exchange. 1767.

T H E
C A S E
O F T H E
Mifs L E S L I E S, &c.

SUMPTUARY laws, or the discouragement of costly manufactures, for apparel, in a little or infant state, are beneficial ; to a great one, such as Britain is now, they are unnecessary, and may be detrimental, because the people of a great state will purchase from foreigners, perhaps their natural enemies, those luxuries which they cannot manufacture at home. It is upon this principle, that parliament and beneficent communities have of late years so laudably distinguished themselves, by their encouragement of home manufactures, especially of commodities with which we are supplied from France and other countries.

That of Thread-lace, as it is the most elegant of all articles of luxury imported from abroad, is at the same time the most universal and expensive. An attempt, therefore, to introduce it into Great Britain, and thereby

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to save the vast sums expended abroad for that commodity, is indisputably an object worthy the attention of the legislature, and of those trustees who have the distribution of the national bounty, for the encouragement of the arts and manufactures. The commodity of Thread-lace deserves a peculiar encouragement, by its materials being produced from a particular species of agriculture, which, if properly pursued, might be a vast saving to the nation, and would employ numbers of hands which are now either idle, or subsist upon public or private charities.

From the considerations above-mentioned, Miss Leslie and her three sisters have, for some years, employed themselves in the thread manufactory, fit for the best laces. They were encouraged by the noble public spirit, of which the legislature set the example, in the premiums appointed to be distributed for the encouragement of manufactures in Scotland. They did not imagine that so generous a bounty could be directed into any channel but that for which it was designed, and animated by this conviction, they applied themselves with such assiduity, to that branch of business which they undertook, that they brought their manufacture of thread to a perfection never before known in Great Britain, as appears from the following authentic testimony of the truly patriotic Society in the Strand, for the encouragement of arts and manufactures.

Resolutions

Resolutions of the COMMITTEE, for
the Encouragement of Arts and
Sciences in the Strand.

A Parcel of thread, yarn, and flax, of the growth of Scotland, and manufactured near Hamilton, under the direction of the Miss Leslies, was produced to the Society for promoting arts, &c. in the Strand: and, after a very strict and judicious examination by the Committee, the Society, on their report, came to the following resolutions:

“ Resolved, It is the opinion of this committee, that the flax, yarn, and thread produced by Miss Leslie, is much superior in fineness and quality to any hitherto grown and manufactured in Great Britain.”

“ Resolved, That it appears to this Committee, by a certificate from Hamilton, that the flax of which this yarn and thread are made, is the growth of Scotland, and the yarn and thread made of it is spun in Scotland, and made under the direction of the Miss Leslies.”

“ Resolved, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that if a manufacture of this fine thread could be established to the profit of the undertakers, it would be of great advantage to the kingdom.”

The foregoing resolutions produced the following Article, honorable to the Miss LESLIES, in Mr. MORTIMER'S Dictionary of Trade and Commerce.

“ **L**AST winter, Miss Leslie, who, with her sisters have some years been attempting the establishment of a manufacture of fine thread in Scotland, laid before the London Society some specimens of yarn and thread spun from flax, produced in the neighbourhood of Hamilton; which flax appeared to be capable of making exceeding fine thread, of as strong a texture as the best brought from Flanders. In the raising this flax, nature, through the peculiar circumstances of soil and air, did the offices of art: the poverty of the ground, and the coldness of the atmosphere, bringing up the flax small and weak, without any other deviation from the common method of culture, than the sowing the seed somewhat thicker than is usually done.”

Such was the generous disinterested testimony given by that excellent Society, and this Author, to the labours of the Miss Leslies; but it is with the greatest reluctance, that they lay before the Public, the treatment they received from a board, more particularly interested to have protected and encouraged them.

No institution was, perhaps, ever more rational, than that of the Trustees and Commissioners for fisheries and manufactures
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in Scotland; and the Miss Leslies thought themselves happy in exerting themselves to deserve their patronage. The Honourable Board of Trustees there, upon the application of the Miss Leslies, were pleased to approve of their labours; desired them to proceed; requested them to exert themselves to bring that branch of business to perfection, and promised them a reward and indemnification by their secretary's letter, dated the 27th of December, 1763. In consequence of this encouragement, the Miss Leslies, with the greatest assiduity, and to the no small risk of their private fortunes, carried their manufacture to such a height, as in the opinion of competent judges, did honour to their art and industry. They provided quantities of lace-thread, sufficient to employ all the lace-workers in Hamilton and its neighbourhood. They even manufactured, from their own thread, a pair of ruffles, which was shewn to the board, and which his Majesty himself, to whom they were presented, did not disdain to wear.

The Miss Leslies could here rest their plea for public encouragement; but the lace-workers of England, have furnished them with one of national importance, which they humbly presume is irresistible in their favour; and it is as follows. After they had, (as has been already mentioned) furnished the lace-workers in their neighbourhood, with sufficient quantities of thread, they sent the rest to
London,

London, where it was worked into lace by the most eminent manufacturers, who have candidly given the following certificates.

Gerrard-street, St. Ann's, Nov. 14, 1765,

To the Gentlemen of the Honourable Arts
and Sciences ;

GENTLEMEN,

“ This is to certify, that I have proved
“ this thread of Miss Leslie's, in the mak-
“ ing of lace, and find it to answer extremely
“ well. And am,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient, and

humble servant,

CHARLES PRIDICE.”

London, Jan. 16, 1766.

“ I have wrought of the British thread,
“ from Miss Leslie, since last August, and
“ do declare, it is as good in texture and qua-
“ lity as any foreign, and as cheap ; some
“ of which thread was made into a pair of
“ ruffles, which was laid before the Society.
“ Witness my hand,

ROBERT GORDG.”

London,

London, Jan. 3, 1766.

“ This is to certify the Committee of the
 “ Arts and Sciences, that the lace laid be-
 “ fore you is wrought with Miss Leslies
 “ thread, and think it full as good, or bet-
 “ ter, than the foreign. Witness my hand,

HENRY STONE.

The Miss Leslies, happily for themselves, are ready and willing to give the most demonstrative proofs of the above-mention'd facts, but they cannot defend themselves from the arrows that have been scattered in the dark against their undertaking: they know not the persons of those who have traduced them: they are ignorant of their allegations, and they flatter themselves, that the insidious hidden manner in which the opposition to them has been propagated, will satisfy the impartial public of its meanness and malignity; but they are afflicted and astonished, to find it comes from that quarter where they expected their chief patronage and protection. They did not foresee, that an undertaking so truly national, could clash with private interests: they did not imagine, that a board, founded on the truest and most disinterested principles of civil policy, could be influenced by secret machinations; and they, at this moment, firmly believe, that the opposition and disappointments they have met with, proceed from misrepresentations only.

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It is to remove the unhappy, and, to them, ruinous, effects of those misrepresentations, that this paper is addressed to the public.

The first intimation of any unfair practices against them, was communicated to them at London, by some members of the Society for the encouragement of arts and manufactures, who informed them, that the Trustees in Scotland, or some one of their number, upon false informations given them, had made an unfavourable representation of their undertaking, and thereby prevented the Society of London for farther considering their case, or giving them a bounty adequate to their labour and expence.

The dreadful malignity of this opposition was felt by the Miss Leslie's in more than one instance. A number of the most respectable names had entered in England, into a subscription for their encouragment. But their generous intentions were damped by the doubts which had been insinuated, concerning the reality of the facts which they had alledged, and which had procured them the above honourable testimonial from the Society, for encouraging arts and manufactures. In short, Miss Leslie who was then in London, was advised by several of the members to return to Scotland, and procure satisfactory vouchers for the facts she had advanced in favour of her manufacture.

Miss Leslie accordingly returned to Scotland, where she humbly apprehends she was furnished with the very best evidences as to
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the truth of her allegations, that the nature of her undertaking admits of, or requires. She applied to the magistrates, town council, and merchants in Hamilton, and to the member of parliament, justices of the peace, and other gentlemen of the county of Lanark, where the whole of her manufacture has been carried on, likewise to the magistrates, and several of the chief merchants in Glasgow, many of whom are themselves manufacturers of, and dealers in, the same commodity. It cannot be supposed, that a private person could influence, far less bias, so respectable a body of men, or that they would obtrude upon the public, false evidences, in an affair that concerned not only their country, but themselves; and therefore Miss Leslie, with all submission, hopes that the following certificates will, with every candid reader, be decisive in her favour.

Nov. 1766.

“ We the persons subscribing, being acquainted with the character of Miss Ann Leslie and sisters, thread-makers in Hamilton, and well informed of the state of the manufactures carried on by them, can fully attest the following facts, viz.

1st, “ That the said Miss Ann Leslie and sisters, are extremely skilful, diligent, and industrious in their business, and have with much pains and application, set on foot the

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“ making

“ making of fine lace-thread, from yarn spun
 “ in this country, and the produce of flax
 “ also raised here.

2d, “ That this branch of manufacture
 “ highly merits protection and encourage-
 “ ment; and if sufficiently patronized,
 “ might, in time, be of great advantage to
 “ Britain, by keeping at home a very confi-
 “ derable sum, that is annually sent abroad
 “ for that article.

3d, “ That the said Miss Leslies have strug-
 “ gled under very great difficulties and dis-
 “ appointments, in attempting to set on foot
 “ the said branch of manufacture.

4th, “ That the Miss Leslies have given
 “ ample proofs to the whole country of their
 “ abilities to carry on that business to great
 “ perfection, if they meet with proper en-
 “ couragement, which we think they very
 “ well deserve.”

Magistrates and Merchants in Glasgow.

James Buchannan.	Walter Stirling.
Neil Bannatyne.	Archibald Smellie.
Andrew Aiton and Co.	Young, Auchincloss and
William Stirling.	Lang.
Brown, Carrick, and Co.	Archibald Ingram.
James Simson.	George Brown.
Anderson and Bannatyn.	James Brown.
William Anderson.	

The Member of Parliament, Justices of the
Peace and other Gentlemen of the Coun-
ty of Lanek.

Dan. Campbell.
Henry Baillie.
Robert Coutt.
George Nisbett.
Alexander Hamilton.
James Cunison.

Mathew Morthland.
John Gordon.
Robert Cullen.
William Hamilton.
Charles Peddie.

Magistrates, Town Council, and Merchants
in Hamilton.

John Miller, Merchant.
John Nasmith.
John Naismith.
Alexander Smith.
John Downs, Merchant.
John Borland.
William Brown.
William Robertson.

Thomas Hart.
William Mather.
James Waddrell.
John Fluttor.
John Archer, and Son.
Charles Murhed.
James Hamilton.
John Sempler.

“ We captain James Robertson, of Earnock,
“ captain James Gilchrist, of Annsfield, and
“ George Bogle, of Daldouie, Esq; three of
“ his Majesty’s justices of the peace, for the
“ county of Lanark; Messrs. Quintin Ha-
“ milton, and Thomas Dunning, magistrates
“ in the town of Hamilton; the reverend
“ Mr. James Miller, minister, in the parish
“ of Hamilton, and Mr. James Lawson,
“ stamp-master in Hamilton, and yarn-in-
“ spector for the five western counties, do
“ hereby certify and declare, upon the best
“ authority,

“ authority, that Miss Ann Leslie, for pre-
 “ sent, at London, and her three sisters, young
 “ gentlewomen, living in this parish, have
 “ been employed for a considerable time, in
 “ manufacturing thread from Scotch flax to
 “ good advantage; and if they are properly
 “ encouraged, can carry that branch of busi-
 “ ness to greater perfection, and much larger
 “ extent: and we further attest, with respect
 “ to the samples of flax and yarn, lately
 “ sent to London, and produced there by Miss
 “ Leslie, that the flax was raised in a vil-
 “ lage, called Uddingston; and the yarn spun
 “ by Jean Thomson, and her daughter, Jean
 “ Alexander, both living in that village, in
 “ the Parish of Bothwell, and neighbour-
 “ hood of this place; and that the thread
 “ was made of the yarn bought from them,
 “ by the said Miss Leslies, as witness our
 “ hands, at Hamilton, this sixth day of De-
 “ cember, one thousand seven hundred and
 “ sixty-five years.”

James Millar, minister.
 James Robertson.
 James Gilchrist,
 George Bogle.

Quintin Hamilton, baillie.
 Thomas Dunning, baillie,
 James Lawson.

That the flax of which the fine thread,
 lately sent to London, and produced there by
 Miss Leslie, was raised in the village of Ud-
 dington, in the parish of Bothwell, North
 Britain, and was spun into yarn in the same
 village,

village, by Jean Thomson, and her daughter,
Jean Alexander; is attested at Bothwell, the
7th of December, 1765, by

JAMES BAILLIE, minister.

Hamilton, Nov. 1, 1766.

“ I have wrought of Miss Leslies thread,
“ for some years, and am daily taking good
“ quantities of it, and find it better and
“ stronger than foreign; all made of Scots
“ flax and yarn; made into thread by Miss
“ Leslie, superior to any ever came from
“ abroad. Witness my hand,

MARGARET WATSON.”

Hamilton, Nov. 3, 1766.

“ We have wrought of the Miss Leslies
“ thread for some years, made of Scots flax
“ and yarn; and we are amongst the oldest
“ lace-workers in Hamilton, and do declare
“ it as good in texture and quality as any fo-
“ reign, and as cheap. Witness our hand,

MARGARET HAMILTON.
MARY HAMILTON.

Hamilton, Nov. 4, 1766.

“ I Ann Henderson, one of the lace-workers
“ in Hamilton, do hereby certify and declare,
“ that I and my scholars, under my direction
“ and

“ and management, have, for these three
“ years, or thereby, wrought of the thread
“ manufactured by the Miss Leslies, residing
“ at Whitehill, in the parish of Hamilton,
“ out of Scots flax; and the same wrought
“ into lace very well, and when wrought,
“ does look very well; and the above facts
“ is attested by

ANN HENDERSON.”

“ As also the above facts is attested by me,
“ another of the lace-workers of Hamilton,

MARGARET SEMPEL.”

Hamilton, Nov. 2, 1766.

“ This is to certify, I Mary Nasmith, mis-
“ tress of one of the lace-schools in Hamil-
“ ton, have been in use to make lace of the
“ thread manufactured by the Miss Leslies,
“ in Whithill, at this place, of various grists,
“ have found it fully as good as the foreign
“ thread. The finest I wrought of it was
“ No. 120, which I made into a suit of
“ ruffles for his Majesty King George the
“ Third, said to be worn on his Majesty’s
“ birth-day,

MARY NASMITH.”

The Miss Leslies sensible of the weight
which the patronage of the board for fish-
eries, and manufactures in Scotland, must
have with the Society, and her friends, at
London, being furnished with the above cer-
tificates,

tificates, on the 21st of November last, enclosed them with other papers, in a fresh application to the board in Scotland.—The reader may judge of her amazement, when her petition was returned not only unanswered, but unopened.

The above is the present state of a manufacture, which the undertakers flatter themselves ought to be an important object to the public. Least the concealment of the smallest circumstance should be imputed to their want of candour, they acknowledge that some years ago, they received from the board of trustees in Scotland fifty-six pounds, and a throw-miln; but the intelligent reader will easily judge how inadequate such a premium is to carry into execution, an undertaking so difficult, and so expensive as that of making thread so fine as to be wrought into lace equal to any imported at an immense expence, from the French and foreigners. The Miss Leslies beg leave to close this address with a few queries; to which they crave an answer from their opponents whether open or secret.

1st, Whether any undertaking can be better calculated, than theirs is, for answering the public spirited views of the Legislature in establishing the board for the encouragement of fisheries, and manufactures in Scotland?

2dly, Whether the carrying their undertaking into execution will not contribute to the honour as well as the interest of the united kingdoms?

3dly,

3dly, Whether they have not given full satisfaction that they are actually the manufacturers of the materials of which they make their thread from its growth in Scotland, and by natives of that kingdom?

4thly, What farther proof of the premises do their opponents require or expect?

5thly, Whether it is for the credit, interest, or reputation of Great Britain, that a cabal formed of persons, either interested or prejudiced against women, whose industry, and good intentions alone procured them friends, ought to defeat the laudable, and national purposes of a British Legislature?

As mention is made in the foregoing pages, of a Subscription having been enter'd into, by a number of the most respectable personages for the encouragement of this design, the Miss Leslies beg leave, to do themselves the honour of publishing the names and generous motives of the Subscribers.

LONDON, *Feb.* 13, 1766.

Miss Leslie, and her three sisters have been employed in the thread manufactory for several years, and have carried it to great perfection, in the opinion of the best judges.

And of late years they have also employed themselves in another branch, by making of very fine thread, fit for the best laces; and have brought it to equal (in the opinion of some lace-workers in England, who have used it) the best foreign thread for the purpose;

pose; for which improvement, they received a premium some years ago from the Trustees for encouraging manufactures in Scotland; and within these few days a strong testimony in their favour from the Society for promoting Arts, &c. in London, as appears by the minutes of the report of their committee, agreed to and confirmed by the Society; a copy of which is hereunto annexed.

And as the Miss Leslies are confident, that this manufacture of fine thread in Scotland, could be carried on by them to a great extent, if properly encouraged; not only to the advantage of the people employed in raising the flax, spinning the yarn, and making the thread, but also to the nation in general, by producing at home, what is now wholly imported from abroad, at a great and surprising expence: on these Accounts,

We the Nobility and Gentry, whose names are hereunto subscribed, willing to encourage a manufactory of such public benefit; and at the same time to help the Miss Leslies, who were the first that effectually engaged in it, and have with great labour and expence brought it to the present state it is in, have resolved to assist the Miss Leslies to go on with their useful design, which may otherways be dropt or forgot, until in due time it shall be effectually encouraged by public authority.

Dutchess of Hamilton.

Dutchess of Queensberry.

Countess of Buchen.

Countess of Marchmont.

Countess of Bute.

Countess of Northesk.

Lady Grant

Mrs. Jane Dennes.

Lady Anne Erskine.

Lady Dundas.

Mrs. Millar.

Mrs. Paterfon.

Mrs.

Mrs. Steward.
 Countess of Lever.
 Earl of Buchan
 Earl of Roseberry.
 Lord Lindors.

Lord Cardross.
 Richard Hill, Esq;
 Rev. Dr. Giffard.
 Dr. Brisbane.
 Mr. William Blakey.

The Miss Leslies beg leave to conclude this address with their acknowledgments to their noble generous patrons who have hitherto encouraged their undertaking. They are ready to shew how practicable it is, to carry it into execution ; but they admit, at the same time, that it is above the reach of their private fortunes without public encouragement. They cannot, however, take their leave of their friends without doing some justice to themselves, by putting them in mind, that if application, and industry are required for carrying on a manufactory, they hope they have a preferable right to the public favour, unless some specimens can be produced in which they are excelled.

P. S. A specimen of the finest flax, yarn, and thread made by the Miss Leslies is to be deposited among the curiosities of the British Musæum. For the sake of the curious, the following computation was made of the length of a thread, made out of a pound of fine flax.

Miss Leslies fine Scotch yarn, made of Scotch flax, 10 quarters of a yard, once round the Reel, which makes 1 thread; 120 threads makes 1 cut, which is 300 yards; 24 cuts makes 1 hesp or 2 flips, which is 7,200 yards; 40 hesps are made out of 1 pound of flax, weight is 288,000 yards, for,

$$10 \times 120 = 1200 \div 4 = 300 \times 24 = 7,200 \times 40 = 288,000 = 16\frac{1}{2} \text{ Miles in Length.}$$

F I N I S.

